

Ah the list of people who were at Pentecost, “Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia”.wait a minute... Meads? That civilization wasn't in existence during the time of Pentecost. Meads had not even existed for hundreds of years. Why are they recorded here as having heard in their own language when they weren't even there?

Because the writer of Acts wants to communicate very clearly to us that the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit fell on the people, was not just a day for the people who heard the apostles preach, but a day for all people for all times. The writer of Acts purposefully tried to make everyone who has ever lived on the face of the earth see that they are included in this Pentecost event.

This scripture might as well read.... Germans, French, Cambodians, Haitians, South Africans, Aztecs, Ukrainians, Canadians, Americans, people from parts of South America, Canadians, Mayans, people from the lost city of Atlantis ... even Americans....All heard in their own language.”

That bit of information is not the sermon, but it is important for you to see that you are personally included in this out pouring of the spirit at Pentecost. The spirit rests on you now. And if you are included in this portion of the scripture reading I hope you can find yourself in the aftereffects of Pentecost as well. And that is what follows now.

The second scripture reading is, Acts 2 beginning in verse 41.

⁴¹So those who welcomed Peter's message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. ⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Pentecost happened....It includes Meads, Romans, us, everybody. So, What do we do now?

In our scripture reading, this diverse group of people present at Pentecost appear to have been wondering, Now What? after Pentecost.

I think I have an idea of now what. Pay attention to your appetite.

After Pentecost, it appears that the early Christians paid attention to their appetites.

First they had an appetite to make things right between themselves. It appears that the first thing that the diverse nations of people realized at Pentecost was that they are now responsible for each other. Other peoples' problems were now their problems where they had not been before. At Pentecost, some are rich and some are poor. Some have privileges as citizens of Rome living in Roman colonies, while others are conquered people who have fewer rights. Some have no financial worries while others do not know if they will have food for tomorrow.

These Christians decide that they will all share their possessions like they hold everything in common, making sure that those have need were taken care. So, a new appetite to take care of each other; and a new feeling of responsibility for each other.

Second they had an appetite, to fellowship with each other; to actually eat food with each other.

In fact, one sign of their conversion, a sure sign that they had changed as people, was their new desire to eat meals with each other.

In the culture of the early church, if you ate someone, that showed that you accepted them. By refusing to eat with someone, you clearly marked the lines of status between you and them.

I'm sure this seems strange to you. Yes we Presbyterians to eat together from time to time and sometimes we get together with other churches to eat. But this eating almost seems coincidental to the fact that we are Christians. They felt they had to eat together IN ORDER to properly live out their faith.

In Pentecost, the attitudes of people changed. And with their attitudes, their practices changed. They ate with each other regardless of status and it often cost them their friends. But their attitudes toward life or appetites had changed. They ate with each other in order to love each other better. The people at Pentecost gained a healthy appetite for those two things, 1) Looking out for those were forgotten before and 2) an appetite for fellowship with each other. And both of those appetites played out in eating meals with one another.

That is what I see going on in the scripture. Here is what I think the message for us today is. My premise: A hearty appetite is the work of the Holy Spirit. That is what I want you to remember. A hearty appetite is the work of the Holy Spirit. And now I will explain what I mean in a few ways.

First: sin in our lives feels like losing an appetite.

One of the harshest effects of sin is that it takes away our ability to enjoy good things. I can't think of a better illustration of sin right now than well.....Hi my name is Andy and I am Carolina-basketball-aholic.

I have realized over the course of watching several seasons that I rarely enjoy watching a game per se. Really I enjoy the anticipation the game and the anticipation of the season, but the whole time I'm watching the actual game, I'm on edge...pins and needles as the fate of my team rises and falls with steals and turnovers.

I can't wait till the season starts, can't wait till each game starts. But, I rarely feel that appreciation of beauty that Richard described a few weeks ago when he preached here and described his father watching the hated Yankees play but enjoyed the well-played game. Most of the time, unless my team is blowing the other team out, I couldn't even tell you my favorite plays, because really I just want the win. Sin is an inability to appreciate the good thing; it feels more like an addiction. A hearty appetite shows itself in feelings of gratitude, instead of anger over what's going wrong. A hearty appetite is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Second: I want to tell you about a time in my life where I discovered a hearty appetite in myself.

I was in college, working on my thesis on a biblical topic, rarely emerging from my room in the house where I was living with two roommates. I was thinking, thinking, always thinking and writing, but enjoying what I was doing. One day I went out to get lunch with a guy I was taking a class with. We went out for coffee and just continued our conversation. I had a thought that seemed more profound then than it does now. But, sharing my thought turned us to prayer. And our prayer encouraged us both. Something happened with me in that time with my friend Rob that is hard to quantify with words. From then on I began to notice that wherever I went I met people who wanted to talk. I felt a greater concern, a love for people that I didn't know before.

A few years later one of my friends noted, "Andy, I think the Holy Spirit bonds people over hot beverages." I said, yeah I think there is something mystical about hot coffee.

Maybe this story of the early church catches my attention because I like the idea that the Holy Spirit likes to work over a plate of food or a beverage.

There is a movie that is also important to me. *Babette's Feast*. My dad has always loved the movie. A couple of months ago, Stephanie's dad actually had the same fond look on his face when I asked if he'd seen it. That look brought back memories. When I was in 4th grade or so, I remember my dad mentioning the title, I actually said that's a dumb name for a movie. Some eighteen years later, I actually watched the movie when it was mentioned in one my textbooks in seminary. The movie is about a woman, Babette, who had been a famous chef in Paris, but comes to a small French village when she cannot afford to live in Paris anymore. Each one of the characters in the French village holds grudges, or has regrets about wasted chances. She came to the village and became the cook for twin sisters who gave up opportunities for lives that could have made them happier. Though she is capable of cooking fine meals, the sisters teach her to cook their plain tasteless food. And she does so for 20 years, until she wins the lottery and has enough money to return to Paris. But, first she requests that she have the opportunity to cook a Parisian meal for her 12 friends in the village out of gratitude for their time together. Her friends talk behind her back about this upcoming meal, saying that they will pretend to enjoy it and comfort each saying they can get through it. They raise their eyebrows and scoff as they see things delivered to Babette in the days leading up to the, such as a turtle, delivered in a big box.

But what happens in the meal is really amazing. Though they come in with poor expectations, slowly their defenses wear down as they drink the wine, enjoy the meal, and begin to reminisce about their lives. And those who have held grudges voice forgiveness. And one of the characters quotes John, remembering, "I am the bread of life...this is the manna that comes down from heaven...if you do not eat of the flesh of the Son of Man you will not have life..." As their walls are broken down during the meal, these characters are transformed. They are awakened to life and start thanking each other. Where there was selfish guarding of themselves before, there is now a generous spirit among them. They become grateful as they realize they are richly blessed. They leave full and singing as they realize they had wasted all this time being estranged from each other.

After the Pentecost experience, the Holy Spirit continues to do something in us and among us that is amazing. We call it all kinds of things when we experience it; sometimes we call it a new lease on life, or sometimes it is discovering what is really important. We realize we have a common bond with people because we know Jesus. We have an appetite.